Letter from Taizé

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Translated into 58 different languages (including 23 Asian ones and 7 African ones), this letter was written by Brother Roger of Taizé for the entry into the twentieth year of the European meetings of young adults. It is being published for the European meeting that will be held for five days in Stuttgart, Germany, from 28 December 1996 to 1 January 1997, as a stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" animated by Taizé. This letter will be reflected on during the INTERCONTINENTAL MEETINGS OF YOUNG ADULTS which will take place each week in Taizé throughout 1997, with young people from Eastern and Western Europe as well as from other continents.

TOWARDS THE YEAR 2000:
TO LIVE OUT RECONCILIATIONS

# From Doubt to the Brightness of a Communion

LETTER 1997

We are in a world where light and darkness co-exist.[1]

As we aspire to the light, could a doubt take hold of us? Far from worrying about this, a Russian mystic wrote, "I am a child of doubt and unbelief... My 'hosanna' has passed through the crucible of doubt."[2]

Happy are those who walk from doubt towards the brightness of a communion in Christ!

Just like the sun dispelling the morning mist, light will shine in the nights of the soul. And springs of cool water will well up even in the deserts of the heart.

Not an illusory communion but a clear-headed one, that impels us to act in the midst of real-life situations. It leads us above all to understand and to love.[3]

Life is filled with serene beauty for whoever strives to love with compassion.

If we were to lose compassion, the inner fire of an inexhaustible kindness, what would be left?[4]

See John 1,5.

Dostoyevsky's *Notebooks*. "Hosanna" is a ebrew acclamation which expresses gratitude d praise to God.

"This is what love is: not that we have ved God, but that God loved us... If God ved us in this way, we too should love one other" (1 John 4,10-11).

"You come to resemble God by acquiring odness. Fashion a merciful and kind heart yourself, in order to clothe yourself in hrist" (Saint Basil, fourth century).

Everywhere across the earth, Christians e eager to take on responsibilities, often very ecific ones, in order to make the earth a tter place to live. And how surprised we are discover everything that is made possible by ove drawn from the wellsprings of the faith!

Those who discover how fragile their faith should remember that faith is quite a simple ality. We move from hesitations to the trust- g of faith a thousand times over, our whole e long. In a prayer, Saint Augustine said to hrist, "My desire was not to be more certain you, but more strengthened in you."

See John 15,13.

See Romans 11,29.

Compassion touches the depths of our being. It re-awakens innocence in our heart of hearts. It enables us to see others as they are.

Whoever chooses to love, and to say it by their life, will be led one day to ask themselves one of the most essential questions of all: how can human suffering be alleviated, the suffering of the innocent, whether close at hand or far away?[5]

Even with very little faith,[6] can we realize that God has a call for each of us? The Gospel helps us to understand that there is no greater love than to go to the extreme of self-giving.[7]

When God calls us to a vocation for a whole lifetime, he invites us to remain in it always.[8] And if obstacles arise, we will be surprised to find ourselves praying: Holy Spirit, you are the guardian of a lifelong vocation; give me what I need not to stop along the way.[9]

Could a doubt come welling up? The desire for God does not vanish for all that. Four centuries after Christ, a believer wrote down his conviction: "If you desire to see God, you already have faith."[10]

If we have the simple desire to welcome God's presence, a flame is kindled in the depths of our being.[11]

Is this flame of love sometimes only a pale glimmer?[12] The incredible thing is that it keeps on burning. An inner reality, this flame enables us to keep going through long nights in almost total darkness.[13]

And a kind of about-face takes place within us... the Gospel comes to change both our life and our heart.

When we are assailed by glumness, boredom and disenchantment, there is a choice to be made.[14] It consists in preparing ourselves to undertake a radical change within; it leads to a Gospel joy.[15]

We surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, entrusting everything to him again and yet again; and hope, the dynamism of love, springs to life again.[16]

→ 7

9 Before leaving his disciples, Chri promised them: "God will send you the Ho Spirit, who will come to comfort you, wh will be with you always" (John 14,16). Just Christ was present on earth with those l loved, by the Holy Spirit he is still just present for us today.

10 Saint Augustine, fourth century.

11 Those who have longed for a communic with God at least once in their life are mo numerous than we may think.

12 To feed that flame, we need to return some very short prayers said over and ov again. They express to God our deepest long ing: "You love us; your forgiveness and you presence in us bring to birth the brightness praise." Or else: "In you peace of heart." C again: "Jesus, have compassion on me!"

13 Unchanging in its essence, prayer can tak on a great diversity of expressions. Some pra in a great silence; others use many word Saint Teresa of Avila wrote, "When I speak t the Lord, often I do not know what I an saying." Some people use just a few words t pray, always the same ones. When we pray, w try to express to God what is most persona Sometimes, an inspiration or an intuitio wells up from the depths of our being. Bu there is no need to worry if no words arise "When our lips are closed and our soul i open before God, our heart speaks to God (Saint Augustine). To support our persona prayer, there is nothing that leads to a com munion with God more than praying in th company of one or several other persons, wit the beauty of singing. A joy inspired by th Gospel finds in such a prayer one of its mos powerful expressions.

14 When the Gospel's joy disappears, human beings do not feel at home anywhere. No mat ter where they are, they think they would b happier somewhere else. The "spirit of praise," grateful hearts, require an inner decision con stantly renewed: "Clothe yourself in joy... Cleanse your heart of harmful sadness and you will live for God" (Hermas, second century) And our joyful hearts make life beautiful fo those around us.

15 One of the first brothers in our com munity has constantly said with simplicity, " rejoice in every instant that I live." Like every human being, he has known trials. How can he rejoice in every instant? He knows what it means to remain faithful in a vocation as the years pass. He knows how to be attentive to what is essential and to return to it at every moment. That is what supports a joy. To go forward in a vocation, he also knows how important it it to have a short inner prayer that is often repeated. For many years he has been praying with these words: "Jesus, my joy, my hope and my life."

16 See Philippians 4,6-7. Christ too surrendered himself to God. When he died on the cross, he prayed: "Into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23,46), in other words, "I entrust my entire life to you."

# MEDITATING ON THE WORD
# MARCH

*These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.*

Ep 5:18b-20
**1 Sat** Give thanks to God our Father always and everywhere, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Co 1:22-25
**2 SUN** We proclaim Christ crucified, which to the nations is foolishness, but to those whom God has called it is Christ, the power and the wisdom of God.

Is 66:12-14
**3 Mon** The Lord says: I am going to send peace to my people like a river. When you see this, your heart will rejoice.

Ps 147
**4 Tue** Give praise to the Lord! It is good to sing praises to the one who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

Jr 17:7-8
**5 Wed** Blessed are they who put their trust in the Lord. Such a person is like a tree planted by the water: in a year of drought it is untroubled and never ceases to bear fruit.

Mt 5:17-37
**6 Thu** Jesus said: If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.

Mk 12:41-44
**7 Fri** Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

1 Co 1:4-9
**8 Sat** You are eagerly waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will continue to give you strength to the very end.

Jn 3:16-18
**9 SUN** God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

1 Co 2:1-5
**10 Mon** Paul writes: I did not come among you with eloquence or wise arguments to announce the mystery of God. I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ crucified, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Ps 143
**11 Tue** I think of all your deeds, Lord, and ponder the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul is thirsting for you like a parched land.

Rm 15:7-13
**12 Wed** Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, for the glory of God.

Mt 4:12-17
**13 Thu** Jesus said: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.

Jn 16:20-22
**14 Fri** Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and you hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

1 Co 3:18-23
**15 Sat** Paul writes: All things are yours; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

Jn 12:20-33
**16 SUN** Jesus said: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be.

Ps 142
**17 Mon** I cry out to you, Lord, set me free from prison that I may praise your name.

Lk 11:9-13
**18 Tue** Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

Rm 4:18-25
**19 Wed** St JOSEPH
St. Paul writes: Though there seemed to be no hope, Abraham hoped and believed, being fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised.

Dn 3:41-43
**20 Thu** We now put all our heart into following you, God, and seeking your face. Rescue us in accordance with your wonderful deeds.

Jn 14:18-21
**21 Fri** Jesus said to his disciples: In a short time the world will no longer see me, but you will see that I live and you will also live.

Dn 3:51-90
**22 Sat** Bless the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart, praise and glorify him forever! For God has rescued us from the hand of death.

Mk 11:1-10
**23 SUN** PALM SUNDAY
Jesus entered Jerusalem, and those who walked in front and those who followed shouted: Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the Kingdom that is coming!

Mt 5:38-48
**24 Mon** Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

Jn 16:32-33
**25 Tue** Jesus said: In the world you will have hardship. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Jn 17:6-11
**26 Wed** Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: I am no longer in the world; they are in the world and I am coming to you, Holy Father. Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

Mt 11:28-30
**27 Thu** Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Lk 23:33-46
**28 Fri** GOOD FRIDAY
On the cross, Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

2 Co 5:13-17
**29 Sat** Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and was raised to life for them.

Jn 20:1-9
**30 SUN** EASTER DAY
When Jesus' disciple entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed.

Rm 14:7-15
**31 Mon** While we live, as when we die, we belong to the Lord. For Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

# JOHANNINE HOURS

## PSALM 13

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Book of Psalms is the frankness with which believers express to God all that is in them. Far from limiting themselves to edifying thoughts, the authors of the psalms cast all their pain and their despair before God, without sorting out in advance what is acceptable and what is not. This freedom in prayer testifies to an impressive trust in God, even in the middle of the night, and already carries with it the seeds of a new dawn.

The author of this psalm sees himself at the bottom of a well, trapped in a suffering that seems without end. What causes his distress, more than this or that particular misfortune, is the feeling that God has abandoned him. Since he no longer feels God's presence, he is left all alone with those inner voices that come from "the enemy" and that bring him closer and closer to despair. That is the meaning of the word "revolt" (v.3a): those obsessive thoughts that try and convince us that God no longer loves us, that in fact we deserve our atrocious fate.

But then, instead of "letting his darkness speak to him" (St Augustine), the psalmist makes a leap of trust and lifts up his groaning to God. From the depths of his darkness, he remembers God's faithful love for him. He makes a choice, refusing to consent to the victory of the enemy. And as a result, a new beginning is made possible; a small space opens up, large enough for God to rush in, and the lament can turn into a song of praise for a rediscovered communion.

- Where can I find the trust to express in prayer everything that is in me, without wearing any masks in God's presence?
- What Bible texts can be a help when "the enemy" tries to separate me from God's love?
- What enables me to keep awake instead of shutting my eyes out of fear or routine?

# Messages Sent to Taizé for the European Meeting of Young Adults in Stuttgart

### *POPE JOHN PAUL II*

On the occasion of the nineteenth European meeting organized by the Taizé Community at Stuttgart, forming a stage in the "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth," the Pope encourages the young people to discern in their lives the presence of the Lord. In this way, like the disciples of Emmaus, they will recognize Christ, who always walks beside them. Contemplating the mystery of the death and the resurrection of the Saviour, they will find hope, because, through the light of Easter, Jesus testifies that no ordeal has the last word against people, and that a future is always possible. A life which, humanly speaking, could seem to have reached a dead end can always become a way ahead. May the Lord give strength and courage to all the young people who, in the silence of prayer and in sharing with their brothers and sisters, take part in the meeting organized by your community!

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother, the Holy Father invokes God's blessing on those who take part in this meeting, on those who animate it, and on the parishes and families who welcome them.

*Ten years ago, John Paul II visited Taizé, on Sunday 5th October 1986, and said to the brothers of the Community:*

"(...) I would like to express to you my affection and my trust with these simple words with which Pope John XXIII, who loved you so much, greeted Brother Roger one day: 'Ah, Taizé, that little springtime!'

"My desire is that the Lord may keep you like a springtime that blossoms and that He keep you little, in the joy of the Gospel and the transparency of brotherly love.

"(...)Although you did not look for it, you have seen young people from everywhere come to you by the thousands, attracted by your prayer and your community life. How can we not think that these young people are the gift and the means the Lord gives you to stimulate you to remain together, in the joy and the freshness of your gift, as a springtime for all who are searching for true life?

"(...)By desiring to be yourselves a 'parable of community,' you will help all whom you meet to be faithful to their church affiliation, the fruit of their education and their choice in conscience, but also to enter more and more deeply into the mystery of communion that the Church is in God's plan.(...)"

### *PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

Youth is a blessing because it unites energ and hope. But age is also a blessing, because represents experience and wisdom.(...)

Only one person unites in himself youth an age, with the qualities of both, but the failing of neither. He is the New Adam, the one wh says to us: "See, I am making all things new (Rev 21,5) and the one who assures us tha our youth will be "renewed like the eagle's (Ps 103,5); he is the one who by the power o the Holy Spirit gives us new life through th cleansing water of rebirth, the one who will b with us to the end of time, our Lord Jesu Christ.

Beloved young people and bearers of hop seek the Lord, then; keep in touch with him showing your love in him, because he is th source of life and of joy, he is light and peace our one true friend and brother, the only guid worthy of trust. Be sure that "he will be foun by those who do not put him to the test, reveal ing himself to those who do not mistrust him (Wisd 1,2). Turn towards the Lord, because h is the head who brings all things together.

May his grace and his infinite compassion b with you all.

### *PATRIARCH ALEXIS II OF MOSCOW*

I greet you with all my heart with the words o Paul, the Apostle of the nations: "Grace an peace to you from God our Father and th Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 1,7), all of you wh represent the young generation of Christians in Europe and who are united, at the invitation o


# Letter from Taizé

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# Taizé

## EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS

# Stuttgart

28th december - 1st January '96/97

...other Roger, for this nineteenth European ...eeting of young people in the historic city of ...uttgart.

...) Now the Christian world is on the thresh-...ld of the third millenium since the birth of ...arist. How will we welcome this holy event, ...membering the words of the angels on the ...ly night: "Glory to God in the highest, and ... earth peace to men on whom his favour ...sts"? (Lk 2,13-14) Do not the bitter words of ...e prophet Jeremiah against the deceptive ...atements of the rulers of the people who cry ...Peace! Peace!' when there is no peace" (Jer ...14) continue to be appropriate in our own ...me, in the present situation in Europe and in ...e whole world?

...) My friends, as we enter a new millenium, ... is up to you, young people, to receive from ...e older generation the responsibility for ...eace, for the prosperity of the peoples, and for ...he integrity of God's creation. Knowing that ...ll is from God, who reconciled us to himself ...hrough Christ and gave us the ministry of ...econciliation" (2 Cor 5,18), it is up to you to ...ring nearer the time when, in the words of the ...salmist, "Love and faithfulness meet together; ...ighteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps ...4,11).

...) I greet you at the beginning of this new year ...f the Lord's grace and send you my wishes for ...our blessing.(...) "May the God of hope fill ...ou with all joy and peace as you trust in him, ...o that you may overflow with hope by the ...ower of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15,13) May ...our meeting, a meeting that is truly authentic, ...e crowned with a blessed success.

### *THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, DR GEORGE CAREY*

My warmest greetings and prayers are with you as you gather in Stuttgart for the 19th Annual European Meeting of young people.

As the recent pictures from Africa have forcibly reminded us, the need for peace among and between peoples remains as important as ever.

As you focus on "inner life and human solidarity," I hope that you will come to a deeper understanding both of yourselves and of others so that you can play your own part in bringing peace to our world.

As many of you know, I have a very high regard for the Community of Taizé and its distinguished work for God.

May God bless you richly as you share these days together.

### *THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, MR BOUTROS BOUTROS GHALI*

This year once again I would like to tell you, on behalf of the United Nations Organisation and on my own behalf, how much my thoughts are with all of you during these beautiful days of meeting together.

At a time when the world is searching, often in pain and suffering, for points of orientation and values which can lead it forward and transform it, a meeting such as yours is, for us, an encouragement and a sign of hope.

You are representatives of the "future generations" of which the United Nations Charter speaks. And we share in common the same ideal of peace, justice, and solidarity.

So my wish is that, thanks to the example you give and thanks to your enthusiasm and your faith, the world may be able to gain a little more wisdom and grow always closer to the ideal of love that Brother Roger desires.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Jesus our peace, in a world where we can be disoriented by the incomprehensible suffering of the innocent, come to enable us to overcome worry and our discouragements through the comfort offered by your Holy Spirit, present in each one of us.

Jesus our hope, if you asked us "who am I for you?" we would like to reply: Christ, you are the one who bears our trials and also our desire to love. And even when everything is silent within us, our heart speaks to you, praying and imploring: give me the spirit of compassion.

***Prayers by Brother Roger***

# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

## APRIL

*These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.*

Hos 6:3-4,6

**1 Tue** The Lord says: I desire faithful love, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.

Ac 5:17-33

**2 Wed** God has raised Jesus from the dead to make him Saviour, and through him to change our hearts and grant forgiveness of sins.

Ac 1:6-11

**3 Thu** Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Ga 5:16-18,22-23

**4 Fri** Let yourselves be guided by the Spirit and you will not be under the Law. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness... trust in others and self-control.

Zc 2:14

**5 Sat** Sing and rejoice, my people, for I am coming to live among you, says the Lord.

Jn 20:19-31

**6 SUN** The Risen Christ breathed upon his disciples and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.

Lk 1:26-38

**7 Mon** Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

Ac 26:1-23

**8 Tue** Paul said: I have borne witness to great and small alike, saying that the Christ was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he was to proclaim a light for all nations.

Rm 8:1-11

**9 Wed** The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

Ac 15:5-12

**10 Thu** Peter said: God chose me so that the nations might hear from my lips the message of the Good News and believe. God makes no distinction between human beings and he purified their hearts by faith.

Ph 2:1-11

**11 Fri** Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humbler yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

Zc 8:16-19

**12 Sat** The Lord says to his people: Within your gates render judgments that are true and make for peace. Yes, love truth and peace.

Lk 24:35-48

**13 SUN** The Risen Christ stood among his disciples and said: Peace be with you!

Ps 10:14-18

**14 Mon** You hear the desire of the humble, Lord; you encourage them and listen to their cry.

2 Co 1:8-11

**15 Tue** Paul writes: Overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

2 Co 8:1-4

**16 Wed** Paul writes of the first Christian communities: Throughout ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and extreme poverty overflowed in rich generosity.

Mt 5:1-12

**17 Thu** Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart, for they shall see God.

Mt 13:44-46

**18 Fri** Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field that someone has found; they hide it again, and in their joy sell everything they have and buy that field.

Ep 1:3-10

**19 Sat** God has let us know the mystery of his good purpose: to bring all things together under Christ as head.

Jn 10:11-18

**20 SUN** Jesus said: I am the good shepherd. My sheep will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Am 5:4,24

**21 Mon** God says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

Ph 3:7-14

**22 Tue** Paul writes: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Jn 12:20-30

**23 Wed** Jesus said: In truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it yields a big harvest.

2 Co 3:4-6

**24 Thu** God has made us able to serve a new covenant, one which is not of written letters but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Mk 16:15-20

**25 Fri** St MARK Jesus sent out his disciples, saying: Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.

Ga 2:19-20

**26 Sat** Paul writes: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Jn 15:1-8

**27 SUN** Jesus said: I am the true vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Lk 19:1-10

**28 Mon** Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus as he passed. Jesus said to him: "Come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today." And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully.

Ep 2:4-6

**29 Tue** Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins.

2 Co 3:16-18

**30 Wed** Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

# JOHANNINE HOUR

## ISAIAH 9,1–

*Johannine hours are meant as a way seeking God in silence and prayer in t midst of our daily life. During t course of a day, take an hour or so read the Bible passage with the she commentary and to reflect on the qu tions which follow. Afterwards, a gro of 3 to 10 people can meet to share wh they have discovered and perhaps for time of prayer.*

In a somber period of wars an invasions, the prophet of Jerusa lem finds a hope that comes no from human efforts but from God faithfulness to his designs of love Centuries earlier, the Lord ha promised the great king Davi "Your house and your sovereignt will always stand firm before me (2 Samuel 7,16). As a result of hi confidence in God's promise Isaiah celebrates the birth (or en thronement) of a royal heir by a oracle where he sees above all th activity of God who wants to be stow on his people the fullness c life.

And so, God will make sure tha his people, freed from the enemies, can enjoy "peace withou end." The mention of Madian (v.3 cf. Judges 7) emphasizes that thi victory is inexplicable in huma terms; it is a kind of miracle. Simi larly the king, described as "a child and "a son", does not seem to d much; "the zeal of the Lord Al mighty" is at work, and the king i there to watch over the new orde created by God. And in fact, the destruction of real enemies is no even mentioned: it is simply the in struments of violence that are con summed by the fire of divine love

The motivation and the conten of this oracle explain why it coul continue to be relevant long afte the king of the time had disap pointed the hopes placed in him For despite the flaws of the king taken one by one, God's promise remains and, for those who be lieve, will infallibly become reality in a near or distant future. One day in the eyes of believers, that word would become flesh. So it is no surprising that the first Christians saw in Jesus the expected "Prince of peace": in his openness to the will of God and his apparent weak ness, humanly speaking, he en abled God to kindle the fire of his love on the earth (cf. Luke 12,49)

- What elements in and around us keep God's loving designs from becoming reality?
- What signs do we find that re awaken our trust by remindin us that this love is stronger tha violence and death?

See Ephesians 5,8. The powerful of the
h are not necessarily the ones who bring
ut changes in the world. Could the Virgin
ry have thought that her life would be es-
tial for the future of the human family?
e her, so many of the humble of the earth
pare ways of peaceful communion. Their
re presence can neutralize certain determin-
s of brutality and hatred.

When children see members of their fam-
quarrel or separate, their hearts experience
earing apart that can mark them for life. If
ung people were to go each week to spend
e with some of these children... They could
en to them, share with them, bring them to
rayer service. There are many older persons,
, who think they have accomplished
thing and have to end their lives in isola-
n. And yet some elderly persons, filled with
flessness, are indispensable for the younger
nerations. They listen, and in this way they
burden them of a load of worries. Spiritual
thers and fathers, according to the Gospel,
given to us a hundredfold. Young people
h do a lot for them, visiting them, helping
em to decorate or repair their homes...

Some people are looking for practical
ggestions to be in solidarity particularly with
ose who are out of work. A father of a
mily wrote: "To meet with the unemployed,
search for ways of expressing a reciprocity,
aring a little of oneself, taking the time to
ten, to help them with paperwork, to sup-
rt them as they look for a job and to en-
urage them when they meet with little suc-
ss. And also to enable others to do
mething they are capable of and that will
ep their self-confidence alive. To find simple
eans to make such a friendship possible..."

Jeremiah 29,11. When we are confronted
ith human misfortune, physical violence or
oral torture, a question arises: if God is love,
here does evil come from? No one can ex-
ain the why of evil. But Christ enters into
lidarity with the incomprehensible suffering
the innocent. Did he not come to earth so
at every human being might know that he
she is loved? And he enables us to take on
sponsibilities to reduce human suffering.
When someone is tempted, they should not
y: my temptation comes from God. God
nnot be tempted by evil and he does not
mpt anyone" (James 1,13).

21 As regards Europe, they know that every nation needs to live in complementarity with the others. Who could be indifferent to the birth of a Europe that is unified, pacified, reconciled? And far from turning inward upon herself, Europe will always discover part of her particular genius in solidarity with other continents. The different parts of the world need one another, too. When they are left to themselves, each of them sees certain basic equilibriums vanish.

22 See John 3,1-8.

In a world where light and darkness co-exist, there are men, women, young people and children who are bearers of light in the human family.[17] Their mere presence is creative; it radiates outward, even if they are totally unaware of it.

They love, and they express it by their lives. They open their eyes to the anguish of the innocent, children or young people marked by broken relationships.[18] They wish to be in solidarity with so many of the young whose future is uncertain.[19]

They live in the spirit of these words spoken almost three thousand years ago: "God has in mind plans for peace and not for misfortune; he wants a future for us."[20]

Despite their minimal resources, they seek to take on responsibilities for preparing around themselves ways of communion and a new future.[21]

In their striving towards a goal, they are not surprised at the resistances so often linked to the process of creation, to new beginnings.

Knowing the value of a simple life, they wish to be attentive to simplicity, always simplicity.

Some of them respond to the call to a life in community. If they let themselves be penetrated by Gospel freshness, they overturn around themselves the heavy weight of indifference and weariness.

One night, a man called Nicodemus came to visit Jesus. He learned from him that without "being born again," no one can see the realities of God.[22] Reconciliation and forgiveness are among those pure wellsprings that lead to a new birth.

Those who seek reconciliation with all their energy discover that there is a "before" as well as an "after."

There is a "before" for all who, wounded by many humiliations, think: I will not manage to forgive and to be reconciled. But one day they start to consider: if I refuse forgiveness, what can I reflect of Christ?[23] As they come to have the desire for a reconciliation, they are more concerned to understand others than to convince them by arguments.

And there is an "after" when, reconciled, they experience a new birth. And God comes to heal the secret wound of the soul.

If we were to let ourselves be clothed in forgiveness as in a garment, we would glimpse a transfiguration of our being and the brightness of a communion.

If the love that forgives became a flame burning within us...

If compassionate hearts were at the beginning of everything...

...around us would shine, whether we knew it or not, a Gospel radiance...[24]

...and these words would be illuminated from within: "Love, and say it by your life!"[25]

23 When timidity keeps us from asking ... forgiveness, why not dare to make a simp... gesture that needs no words: extend yo... hand so that the other person can make in... the sign of forgiveness, the sign of the cross.

24 Communicating Christ never mea... trying to impose oneself. The Gospel is no... vice that clamps down upon another perso... conscience and entraps them. A believer fr... Bangladesh, speaking about those around h... who do not know Christ, said, "When you ... near a fire, you are warmed. When the fire ... God's love is in us, does it not shine on the... who are close to us, even if we do not reali... it?"

25 Adapted from Saint Augustine, fou... century.

TOWARDS THE YEAR 2000:
TO LIVE OUT RECONCILIATIONS

# A Call to the Younger Generations

Love, and say it by your life! Without love, what future is there for Christians?

In the coming years, if we could try to make a host of different reconciliations possible around us, in the most diverse situations... They will allow us to enter the third millenium ready to live an adventure of reconciliation that is as daring as possible.

Without joy and simplicity, those Gospel values so intimately connected to one another, how can we radiate a spirit of forgiveness, not only among believers but with non-believers as well?

What is true for one person is also true for that mystery of communion which is the Body of the risen Christ, his Church.[1] When, even with very few resources, the Church welcomes in joy and with an infinite simplicity, it opens wide the gates of mercy and of consolation.[2] And the Church becomes what it is at its most transparent, a source of reconciliation, a beacon of love.[3]

*Christ Jesus, source of a communion, you did not come to earth to condemn the world but so that every human being might find a road open through the Holy Spirit. We are astonished to find that no one is excluded either from your love or from your forgiveness. And, risen from the dead, you come to turn us into ferments of peace and reconciliation.*

1 In the simplicity of faith, we can realize that the Risen Christ is above all communion... He did not come to earth to start a new religion; he did not criticize existing religions. He came to offer to everyone this mystery of a communion of love in his Body, his Church.

2 More than we realize, today a great number of young people pray; they long for a communion with Christ and with the Holy Spirit. But a question remains: "Why, in vast regions of the world, are so many of the young absent from prayer in the churches?"

3 In the midst of the twentieth century there appeared a man named John, born in a humble peasant family in the North of Italy. With regard to the reconciliation of Christians, that old man, John XXIII, said some words that are among the most crystal-clear imaginable: "We will not try to find out who was wrong and who was right; we will only say: let us be reconciled!" At the very same time, in Constantinople there was another holy witness to Christ, Patriarch Athenagoras. At the end of a visit we paid to him, as we were taking our leave, the patriarch remained standing in the doorway and, making the gesture of raising the Eucharistic chalice, spoke these final words: "The cup and the breaking of the bread, there is no other solution, remember!"